



ASSOCIATION OF NORTHWEST STEELHEADERS

P.O. Box 55400 Portland, OR 97238
office@anws.org • (503) 653-4176

April 19th, 2021

Re: Northwest Steelheaders Testimony to Amend HB 2298

Dear Chair Golden and members of the Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery Committee:

My name is Betsy Emery. I am the Advocacy and Campaign Manager for the Association of Northwest Steelheaders. Our organization was founded in 1960 and is one of the oldest recreational fishing and conservation non-profit organizations in the Pacific Northwest. We have eight chapters in Oregon and one in Southwest Washington, representing over 800 members and nearly 5,000 supporters dedicated to enhancing and protecting fisheries and fish habitats for today and tomorrow, with a vision of abundant, sustainable fisheries and healthy watersheds.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 2298, a bill to allow property owners to voluntarily construct “environmental restoration weirs.”

Northwest Steelheaders supports efforts to restore incised streams and we recognize the value of these types of structures in achieving that goal. We appreciate the many changes that have been made to the bill over the past few years to address a variety of issues from the conservation community, but we continue to have concerns in the current version that we would like to see amended, either via the legislation or through the rule-making process.

There are numerous examples of beaver dams and their analogues providing important riparian benefits, including improving stream function, channel complexity, deep pools, and cold water refugia, which in turn have positive benefits on salmon habitat quality and overall watershed health.

Specifically, we are concerned that the term “environmental restoration weir” is not specifically defined considering it is the foundation of the bill. Some of these structures have been

scientifically shown to be more beneficial than others. Therefore, the types of structures permitted under this bill need to be clearly defined, including their form, function, and composition, to ensure they align with best available science and minimize environmental impacts in arid regions of Oregon.

We are also concerned that structures in areas without *current* migratory fish populations will be exempt from fish passage requirements, even if migratory fish *historically* occupied the area. Given the significant number of fish passage barriers in our State, it is important to ensure that future developments do not impede potential opportunities for salmon recovery. Weirs proposed in habitat that was historically occupied by salmon or steelhead should be required to include fish passage elements. Fish passage should not be predicated on whether it is economically feasible for the property owner, it needs to be based on the environmental factors of the proposed location.

While we agree with the underlying concept of providing pathways for property owners to use weirs to restore streams and floodplain function on their private property, we recommend that these concepts be more clearly defined to ensure the intent of the bill is realized.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betsy Emery". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Betsy Emery
Advocacy and Campaign Manager
Association of Northwest Steelheaders
BEmercy@anws.org